

LISTENING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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There are many objective obstacles in understanding of foreign speech at first attempt. Among them there are difficulties stipulated by the conditions of listening, i.e. external noise, hindrances, poor acoustics, and also the difficulties caused by the individual characteristics of the source of speech, especially diction, tone, articulation, different accents and dialects. Some difficulties can be caused by linguistic features of the perceived material, the usage of a large number of unknown words, idiomatic expressions, colloquial expressions, technical terms, abbreviations. Among the basic skills of listening the following skills can be identified:

- to separate the important from the unimportant;
- to define the theme of the message;
- to divide the text into meaningful parts;
- to establish logical connections;
- to highlight the main idea;
- to take messages at a certain pace, certain duration before the end without gaps.

There are different ways of overcoming such difficulties. Teachers can use the following methods to facilitate the task of understanding. For example, choosing a slow tempo of reading and speaking at the first stages of teaching, using mimics and gestures, eye contact, using pauses between phrases and reasonable usage of audio materials at the lessons. Studying foreign a language learners should listen to men’s and women’s voices of different age for them to understand all speakers, not only their teacher. Teachers should also take into account the following hints such as:

- knowledge of speech patterns are supposed to serve the specific situation of communication;
- frequent phraseological phrases and clichés can greatly facilitate the understanding of speech at listening;
- the number of unfamiliar words can be 3% of all the words of the text;
- unknown words should not be the keywords.

It will help to form the skill to guess the meaning of the words and also to understand the sense of the phrase and the text in general, in spite of presence of unknown elements in it.

Using the system of exercises for formation of listening skills can surely be helpful. If they are compiled in ascending order of language and operational difficulties, taking into account the sequence of formation of speech skills in various types of speech activity. In constructing the system of exercises for listening teachers should consider the following:

- interaction of listening and speaking as two forms of verbal communication;

- interaction of preparatory and speech exercises, their dosage and sequence depend on the language training of students and verbal experience, particularly in the area of listening comprehension;
- gradual increase in difficulty that will ensure feasibility of exercises at different stages of training.

The aim of the preparatory exercises is to remove linguistic or psychological difficulties before listening of the task that will enable the listeners to focus on the perception of the content. Such exercises help to single out unknown phenomena from the speech messages, determine the meaning of the words using derivational guesswork, to define the context meaning of various lexical items and grammatical constructions; recognize and understand synonymous and antonymous phenomena, to identify the most informative parts of the message, to fill the gaps in understanding by anticipating the level of the text; to relate the text to the situation of communication; to divide the audio-text into the main sense-parts and to define the main idea in each of them; to fix the main part of information. Preliminary statement creates a motivational and organizational setting, mobilizing an active work. It includes tasks' wording, clarifies the way of its performance, and orients the difficulties. The initial setting defines the degree of motivation of students, and, consequently, the percentage of assimilation of the content. In addition to increasing the motivation and formulation of the setting to the primary listening, the teacher should remove potential difficulties. Motivational setting shows the students what to focus on, what difficulties they can come up, and in connection with this teachers can organize the work. Fortunately there are numerous online resources such as <http://www.5minuteenglish.com/listening.htm>. We can choose a topic with ready materials. When the topic is chosen, it is possible to find a dialogue or a short text on the topic. Before listening it is useful to write down the unknown words and the key words as they will be helpful to understand the main idea of the text. Post-listening exercises will help to learn the new words and phrases as they will be repeated in the task-sentences and questions.

References:

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